ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME 6/23/65	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED000129	7467	N.A.

4. AUTHOR(S):
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5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED:
A Survey of the Kind and Quality of Students Attending the State University of New York State Teachers Colleges 1950-1951

6. PUBLICATION TITLE:
Penn State Review of Educational Research

7. EDITOR(S):
N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. Penn State Univ.
ST. University Park,
CITY, STATE Pa.
TELE. EXT.
INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
The Pennsylvania State Univ.

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
IV	51-57	Dec. 52	7

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TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR abstract of doctoral dissertation and survey

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

surveys	teacher edu.	aptitudes	achievement
abstracts	students	family	
professional edu.	backgrounds	experience	
		socio-economic factors	

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

The purpose of the study was to discover, organize and analyze relevant facts concerning the kind and quality of students attending the teachers colleges of New York State. Specifically the survey included an analysis of the scholastic aptitude possessed by the students and relevant and significant facts concerning their experiential, familial, and social backgrounds. The study included also a brief analysis of the achievement of the 1950-51 seniors as measured by the National Teacher Examination. Findings point to eight implications for the improvement of the programs for the preparation of teachers at the State teachers colleges. Identifies the need for further research.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education
	23. DURATION OF PROJECT	

HE 7467

A SURVEY OF THE KIND AND QUALITY OF STUDENTS ATTENDING THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK STATE TEACHERS COLLEGES 1950-51

Penn State Review of Educational Research
Vol IV, No 1, Dec. 52

- Raye H. Conrad Jr. -

ED000129

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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Background and Need for the Study

In March, 1948 the Legislature of the State of New York passed the necessary laws creating the State University of New York. At that time the eleven teachers colleges became part of the State University subject to the powers and duties of the trustees.

Not least among the many responsibilities of the trustees was the recommending of revisions in the curricula and training programs of the state teachers colleges. The trustees were empowered to increase appropriately the emphasis on general education courses. Early in 1950 at the direction of the State University authorities local, regional, and state committees composed of teachers colleges faculty members began to consider the various possibilities by which better general education programs could be developed at the state teachers colleges. It became apparent as the committees worked, that the programs could not be planned except in terms of the students in attendance at the State University Teachers Colleges.

Organized information concerning the kind and quality of students attending the teachers colleges was not available. The committees recommended that the Central Office of the State University sponsor the gathering of such information. This study was an attempt to gather, organize and analyze information concerning the kind and quality of students attending the State University Teachers Colleges in 1950-51.

A second need justified the study. New York State in common with the rest of the nation has a severe shortage of elementary teachers. Recruitment of the large number of qualified high school graduates needed for the profession is made more difficult because of the unfavorable generalizations made concerning those in preparation for teaching by parents, laymen, and members of the teaching profession. Often support for the generalizations are based on hearsay, on an isolated case or two, on evidence collected from studies made a quarter of a century ago, or on data gathered in studies made in other states. A definite need existed for relevant data in organized form to refute or prove generalizations made about the students in attendance at the State University of New York Teachers Colleges.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to discover, organize and analyze relevant facts concerning the kind and quality of students attending the teachers colleges of New York State. Specifically the survey included an analysis of the scholastic aptitude possessed by the students and relevant and significant facts concerning their experimential, familial, and social backgrounds. The study included also a brief analysis of the achievement of the 1950-51 seniors as measured by the National Teacher Examinations.

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Limitations of the Study

This research survey concerned itself specifically with the 1950-51 undergraduate regular session enrollment of the teachers colleges located at Albany, Brockport, Buffalo, Cortland, Fredonia, Geneseo, New Paltz, Oneonta, Oswego, Plattsburg, and Potsdam.

Procedures

Three major procedures were followed. The part of the study dealing with the kind of students in attendance utilized the questionnaire technique. A questionnaire designed to help determine the social, economic, educational, and experimental backgrounds of the students was administered to a 20 per cent random sampling of the total undergraduate enrollment. The responses were tabulated and organized into tables which indicated the number and percentage of students responding to the various items.

The quality of students was determined through an analysis of two kinds of data - high school averages and gross scores obtained on the American Council Psychological Examination for College Freshmen. These data were organized for analysis by class, by college, and by curricular specialization. The high school averages of the 1950-51 students were compared with the freshman entering class of 1944. Mean differences were determined and critical ratios computed and tested for significance. The mean attained by each group on the Psychological Examination was compared with the mean for Four Year College freshmen as indicated in the norms bulletins. Critical ratios were computed and tested for significance at the 1 per cent and 5 per cent level.

The third major part of the study sought to provide evidence as to one kind of achievement made by the 1950-51 seniors. The results obtained by the seniors on the National Teacher Examinations were compared with two sets of standardized norms. First, the nation-wide norms based upon the combined test scores of teachers-in-training and teachers-in-service. Second, norms established on a selected group of seniors attending teachers colleges, liberal arts colleges, and universities which require seniors preparing for teaching to take the National Teacher Examinations.

The study concludes with a summary of tentative generalizations based upon the data gathered, some implications for authorities in charge of the state teachers colleges, and recommendations for further studies.

Summary of Findings

On the basis of the data available the following tentative generalizations may be made:

Kind of Students

1. The students are native born Americans. Over 90 per cent were born in New York State.

2. The students come in large proportion from native American stock.

3. In 80 per cent of the homes of students, English is the only language spoken. In the remaining 20 per cent English is spoken in combination with Italian, German, Hebrew, Polish or French. In no home is a foreign language spoken to the exclusion of English.

4. The parents of the students have on the average attained a high school education.

5. Fifty per cent of the fathers earn their living as proprietors, managers, officials or skilled craftsmen. The remaining 50 per cent are distributed as follows: about 13 per cent are clerical workers, about 12 per cent are professional men, about 9 per cent are farmers, 6 per cent are operators, 3 per cent are service workers, 3 per cent are semi-professional workers, and 3 per cent are unskilled laborers.

6. The family circle of the students is in most cases complete. About 6 per cent reported mothers dead and about 10 per cent reported fathers dead. About 6 per cent reported homes broken by forces other than death.

7. The students come from families which have an average of three children.

8. Over three-fourths of the students come from homes owned by their parents.

9. About one-third of the students enrolled are men.

10. Ninety-two percent of the students graduated from public high schools. Sixty per cent of the students ranked in the upper third of their graduating class. Thirty-seven per cent ranked in the middle third.

11. The students come in unequal distribution from the various size population centers. About one-half come from cities of over 10,000 population. Of this group 8.90 per cent come from New York City; 22.25 per cent from cities in the 50,000 - 1,000,000 population size; 20.72 per cent from smaller cities of 10,000 - 50,000 population. The remaining one-half are distributed as follows: 20.50 per cent from villages, town, and small cities of 2,500 - 10,000 population; 17.38 per cent from towns and hamlets of under 2,500 in population; 10.27 per cent come from farms.

12. About 15 per cent revealed that their mothers were or are teachers; 5.98 per cent have fathers who were or are teachers; 9.29 per cent indicated that a brother and/or sister was or is a teacher.

13. A large percentage of the students worked with children either for pay or voluntarily during the last six years. These experiences were outside of the formal and organized

professional college course requirements.

14. The survey indicated an active student participation and leadership in high school extra-curricular activities on the part of the students sampled. School athletic teams, intramural sports, choral singing, class organization work, dramatics, school year book and newspaper production were the most popular activities.

15. State University Teachers College students, while in high school were active in community activities. Scouting, Red Cross work, community recreation program, semi-pro or sand lot athletics, community music groups and Y.M.C.A. or Y.W.C.A. programs were the most popular.

16. A wholesome degree and variety of college extra-curricular participation was indicated. Religious club work, sorority and fraternity activities, intramural sports participation, professional society and forum type club programs engaged large percentages of students.

17. Only a small percentage of students indicated participation in community-wide activities while in college.

18. It can be said that previous successful and enjoyable experiences with children, the security offered by the profession, the opportunity for a tuition-free college education, the influence of a former high school teacher, and the influence of parents ranked in that order as the most important factors in motivating the students to prepare for teaching.

19. The most important influences in deciding a student's choice of a particular state teachers college are nearness of the college to his home, the college catalog material, a friend attending or one who has attended the college of the student's choice, the effort of a college representative, a specific preparation offered, and a special visitation day designed for prospective students.

Quality of Students - High School Averages

1. The 3,110 freshmen who entered in 1950 equaled the average of the 1,629 freshmen who entered in 1944 and are used as a base group for comparison in this study.

2. The 2,290 sophomores surpassed the average of the 1944 entering freshmen. The slight plus mean difference was statistically significant at the 5 per cent level. It can be said that the sophomores upon admission to college were about equal to the 1944 group.

3. The 1,951 juniors excelled, but not significantly, the mean of the 1944 entering class. Since data were furnished on surviving juniors, it can be said that this class upon admission to college did not equal the 1944 group.

4. The 1,770 juniors did not compare favorably with the base group. It can be said that this class upon admission to college did not equal the 1944 group.

Quality of Students - Psychological Examination Scores

1. The 3,471 freshmen measured surpassed the average of the freshmen who entered for Four Year Colleges of the nation.

2. The 2,387 surviving sophomores excelled, but not significantly, the average of the Four Year College freshmen group of the nation used as a base group. It can be said that the 1950-51 sophomores upon admission to college were as a group about equal to the mean of the Four Year College freshmen of the nation.

3. It can be said that the 1,674 juniors for which data were available did not compare favorably upon their entrance to college with the Four Year College norm.

4. The 1,313 seniors for which data were available did not compare favorably as a group with the Four Year College norm.

Achievement as Measured by the National Teacher Examinations

1. On all but one of the tests of the Common Examination of the National Teacher Examinations the 1950-51 seniors exceeded the nation-wide average.

2. On all of the tests of the Common Examination of the National Teacher Examinations the 1950-51 seniors exceeded the average of the "selected group of seniors" as given in the norms bulletin.

3. The seniors who took the optional examination in Education in the Elementary School excelled the nation-wide average.

4. The seniors preparing for secondary teaching who took optional examinations in their major fields of study exceeded by far the nation-wide averages.

5. The seniors preparing in Industrial Arts Education surpassed the nation-wide average by a substantial margin.

Implications

The findings of this study point to implications for the authorities charged with the improvement of the programs for the preparation of teachers at the state teachers colleges:

1. The study indicates that the students now entering the state teachers colleges are as a group equal in scholastic aptitude to the average of the Four Year College students of the nation. Curriculum experimentation and changes should be undertaken by college authorities with this fact in mind.

2. The data gathered in this study should serve as a base for future studies. Full scale surveys of the kind and quality of students attending the teachers colleges should be an on-going project of the Central Office of the State University.

3. The facts concerning the kind and quality of students preparing for teaching at the state teachers colleges should be brought to the attention of the membership of the New York State Teachers Association and to citizen groups. The recruitment of the quantity and quality of teachers needed for the schools of the state will be materially aided if more accurate generalizations based upon recent facts can be made concerning those in preparation for teaching at the state teachers colleges.

4. The study clearly indicates the value of a Selective Admissions Examination. Results reveal that the 1950-51 juniors and seniors were inferior in academic quality to the 1950-51 freshmen and sophomores.

At the time the juniors and seniors entered the teachers colleges, the Selective Admissions Examination program had been temporarily discontinued as a state-wide policy because of war time travel restrictions. An analysis of the high school scholarship averages and the scores obtained by the 1950-51 juniors and seniors on the American Council Psychological Examination indicates that the quality of the 1950-51 freshmen and sophomores was superior. These classes were admitted on the basis of a Selective Admissions Examination.

It would seem that the Selective Admissions Examination program had at least two desirable effects. First, it weeds out less able applicants. They fear the competition of more capable students and do not take the tests. Second, the greater competition of more able students makes success more significant. The prestige resulting from admission to the state teachers colleges helps secure better students for instruction. The Selective Admissions Examination should be continued as a requirement for entrance to a State University Teachers College.

5. The National Teacher Examinations should be continued as one kind of evaluation of achievement. Thorough analysis of the results obtained at each of the colleges should aid curriculum revision and experimentation.

6. A large percentage of the 1950-51 student population indicated that they had been attracted to teaching because of previous successful and enjoyable experiences with children. This fact suggests strong recruitment possibilities. The State University of New York Teachers Colleges should encourage and help local school authorities in organizing opportunities for high school students to work with younger age groups under competent supervison.

7. The fact that only 8 per cent of the total 1950-51 enrollment of the state teachers colleges came from private high schools suggests a source for greater recruitment of potential teachers.

8. The survey revealed a very meager percentage of community activity participation on the part of the prospective teachers enrolled in the state teachers colleges. It would appear that the college officials should provide within the professional course structure greater opportunity for student participation in community activities. The learnings gained through participation in the more formal programs of scouting, boys' club work, 4-H clubs, settlement house work, etc., would be invaluable to teachers.

Need for Further Research

Further research, need for which is revealed through this investigation, would include:

1. A thorough study of students "survival" or student "morality" is needed. The 1950-51 freshman class of the State University Teachers College should be studied intensively to graduation. Evaluation of the relationship between Selective Admission data and success in college should be undertaken.

2. The data revealed on the kind of students enrolled should be compared with the 1950 census data for New York State as soon as it is available. It is important to know how the characteristics of the student population of the teachers colleges compare with the characteristics of the general population of the state.

3. This investigation revealed that the 1950-51 juniors and seniors were inferior in scholastic aptitude when compared with the national mean for Four Year Colleges on the A.C.E. Psychological Examinations. The 1950-51 freshmen and sophomores were equal to or slightly above the national average. Investigation designed to reveal the proportion of elementary teachers produced from the 1950-51 junior and senior classes should be undertaken and compared with a similar study made on the 1950-51 freshmen and sophomore classes.

4. Further study is needed to show the relationship between Selective Admissions data and achievement on the National Teacher Examinations.

5. Research is needed to determine why the 1950-51 seniors fell below the nation-wide average on the test of History, Literature, and Fine Arts of the National Teacher Examinations. Casual analysis of the curriculums as organized for the specialized fields of teaching (Health and Physical Education, Industrial Arts, Music Education, etc.) indicates a limited number of course hours in the areas of history, fine arts, and literature. This might be part of the answer. Thorough investigation is necessary.